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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the statewide evaluation of Utah's year-round and extended-day schools, two scheduling models developed to expand the capacity of existing school facilities to serve the needs of a burgeoning student population in some Utah school districts. When asked about their family's experience with year-round education, a substantial majority of patrons responded positively. However, 15 to 20 percent reported problems with vacation, child custody, and multiple schedules. Teachers responding to two questionnaires indicated they did not experience extreme stress except in certain areas including parent teacher conferences, paperwork, salary, and student-teacher ratio. Teachers indicated that the year-round schedule benefitted student attitudes and achievement. Observers found year-round schools to be operating smoothly; students were generally well-behaved and on task. Year-round schools appear to benefit student achievement and have lower overall per student costs. Extended day patrons reported little change for their families. Patrons (36 percent) expressed some concern over the size of specialty classes. Some felt there was less individual attention to students, a more crowded feeling, and less quality information concerning student progress. Although a majority of extended-day teachers felt they could meet their students' needs, many felt they saw too many students daily and that parent relations were more difficult. Although extended-day schools did not show significant test score gains, the program was not found harmful to student achievement. Educational costs were higher on the extended-day schedule than before the program's implementation although per student utility cost and cost per student for teachers remained the same. Several recommendations are provided. (MLH)

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STATEWIDE EVALUATION OF YEAR-ROUND AND EXTENDED-DAY SCHOOLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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James R. Moss
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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December 22, 1989

This report summarizes the statewide evaluation of Utah's Year-Round and Extended Day Schools. The two school scheduling models discussed in this report have been developed to expand the capacity of existing school facilities to serve the needs of a burgeoning student population in some Utah school districts. These efforts have been encouraged and supported by Governor Norman Bangerter, the Utah State Legislature, and the Utah State Board of Education. Most of these efforts have resulted from planning and development grant funds provided through the Year-Round School and Effective Facility Use Program, an incentive grant program administered by the Utah State Office of Education.

This report is the result of a unique partnership between the Utah State Office of Education, Brigham Young University, the Jordan School District and the various other participating school districts. The project was directed by Dr. Adrian Van Mondfrans with the able assistance of Mrs. Joan Moody and Dr. Larry Walters, all of Brigham Young University. This research team worked diligently with a project steering committee consisting of representatives of the State Office and each of the districts operating year-round or extended day schools. This steering committee consisted of the following listed individuals:

Betty Ashbaker, Davis County School District
David Adamson, Granite School District
Eugene Bennett, Washington County School District
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Dean Rowley, Nebo School District
Devon Sanderson, Jordan School District
Jed Waddoups, Weber County School District
Jerry Wilde, Box Elder County School District
Steve Zsiray, Cache County School District

This evaluation will help shape public policy and school district practices in Utah for years to come. I congratulate the many people who contributed so much to its completion and I encourage its review by anyone interested in examining the educational, financial and social implications of significant school scheduling changes.

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SUMMARY

YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION

YEAR-ROUND PATRON REPORT

When asked about their family's experience with Year-Round Education, the majority of patrons, two-thirds to four-fifths, responded positively concerning their experience with the program. However, fifteen to twenty percent of the patrons reported problems with vacation, child custody and dealing with more than one schedule in the family.

Patrons were asked to compare their experiences with their school on a Year-Round and traditional calendar. Between eighty and ninety percent of patrons rated Year-Round Education as the same or better than the traditional calendar on all nine aspects of the school experience, including overall quality of program, child's opportunity to learn, and individual attention received by the child. Seventy-eight percent of Year-Round patrons gave Year-Round Education a positive or very positive overall rating. When asked to express a preference for a solution to housing students in their district, seventy-eight percent preferred Year-Round Education to all other possibilities. The choice receiving the next largest percentage was raising taxes with eight percent.

YEAR-ROUND TEACHER REPORT

Year-Round teachers responded to two questionnaires. We also interviewed a sample of teachers in each school. On the first questionnaire, The Maslach Burnout Inventory, only one percent of Year-Round teachers rated high on all subscales, indicating the presence of the psychological construct referred to as "burn out." Teacher responses to the second questionnaire confirmed that Year-Round teachers did not experience an extreme amount of stress, except in several areas. One-fourth of Year-Round teachers expressed a large amount or extreme stress associated with parent conferences, one-third responded with similar stress ratings for paperwork. Fifty-five percent of Year-Round teachers experience a large amount or extreme stress concerning teaching salary and

forty-five percent expressed similar stress concerning the number of students with whom they work. Teachers indicated that Year-Round Education was good for students, including improved student attitude (76%), students learn more (73%), students return from breaks ready to work (93%), and Year-Round Education benefits students (84%). Extended contract teachers experience more stress on the program. While seventy-three percent of Year-Round teachers with traditional contracts experience less stress on the Year-Round calendar than on the nine month calendar, only forty-five percent of Year-Round teachers on extended contracts responded that the Year-Round calendar was less stressful. Eighty-four percent of Year-Round teachers responded that, given a choice, they would teach on a Year-Round calendar.

Teacher interview data confirmed questionnaire data, and provided additional information. The process of changing rooms after track changes creates stress for teachers and is probably the greatest drawback they see in the program. Teachers whose own children are not on Year-Round calendar, either in secondary school or in a traditional elementary school, experience some of the same problems with scheduling as Year-Round patrons. Additionally, teachers who have had lucrative summer employment and have not been able to obtain extended contracts are concerned about a loss of income.

SCHOOL INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

Observers in the Year-Round schools found these schools to be operating smoothly, students were generally well behaved and on task. The majority of custodians found deep cleaning a challenge, although some had developed rotating deep cleaning schedules. Because the number of children eating lunch changed depending on the size of the tracks attending school, lunch room personnel had moved to more flexible schedules to handle the change in number of students. The only additional staff which all schools had added was in the office, where additional personnel or additional hours for existing personnel had been added to handle registration and

communication needs. Of all the school personnel, the principals appeared to experience the most stress. The additional load of students, complexity of the program, double scheduling of events, the loss of summer months for planning time, and increased stress in relationships with patrons were cited as problems which Year-Round principals face.

ACHIEVEMENT DATA

All school districts do not give the same achievement tests and some districts have changed tests, norms, or timing of tests in the period of interest for this evaluation. Because of this, each school was considered as a case study and evaluators compared performance before the implementation of Year-Round calendar with performance after. Using probability theory, Year-Round schools were found to be averaging higher test scores after the implementation than before ($p<.05$). Thus, we can say that with the implementation of Year-Round Education and all the changes which may take place simultaneously, including increased teacher enthusiasm, more structured curriculum, and increased testing and tracking of students, academic achievement of students is not hurt and may possibly be benefitted.

COST ANALYSIS

Cost analysis of the Year-Round program was complicated by three factors. First, design capacity for a given school is a nebulous figure, which varies depending on its source. Second, many of the schools were over their stated design capacity before implementation of the calendar and, while the quality of life in the school may have increased after implementation, enrollment did not. Finally, several schools have been moved to the Year-Round calendar before enrollment needs because of political expediency.

Cost analysis of the Year-Round program showed that overall per student personnel costs are not markedly different than prior to the implementation of the program. Enrollment levels in Year-Round schools increased between ten to twenty percent after

implementation. Per student utility costs are roughly constant. Educational costs are either the same or somewhat lower on the Year-Round calendar and appears to provide a feasible option to new construction. Of course, if new buildings would be needed to otherwise handle the increasing student load, the implementation of a Year-Round schedule saves the per student seat costs of building and financing a new school. This cost is estimated at between $200 and $300 per year per seat.

EXTENDED-DAY SCHEDULE

EXTENDED-DAY PATRON REPORT

Extended-Day patrons reported little change for their families because of the Extended-Day schedule. Patrons (36%) did express some concern over the size of specialty classes. Between one-fourth and one-third indicated that there was less individual attention to students, a more crowded feeling in the school, less quality of relationship between teacher and child, and less quality information about their child's progress on the Extended-Day schedule. Thirty-eight percent felt there would be more teacher burn out on the program. Sixty-three percent of patrons gave Extended-Day an overall positive rating. Forty-nine percent of Extended-Day patrons expressed a preference for Extended-Day to solve student housing problems in their school; however, 32% of Extended-Day patrons expressed a preference for Year-Round Education for this purpose.

EXTENDED-DAY TEACHER REPORT

As in Year-Round schools, Extended-Day teachers were given two questionnaires and a sample of teachers were interviewed in each school. Only four percent of Extended-Day teachers rated high or burnt out on the Maslach Burnout Inventory. As with Year-Round teachers, Extended-Day teachers did not rate high on other general stress items. When asked about specific aspects of teaching on an Extended-Day schedule, sixty-eight percent responded that they are able to meet their students' needs and seventy-six percent felt that their students are not lost or confused on the schedule.

Fifty-one percent of teachers felt that they saw too many students daily and forty-one indicated that relations with parents were more difficult. Fifty-six percent of Extended Day teachers responded that they would choose to teach on the Extended-Day schedule. Teachers who were on extended contracts experienced less stress and were more positive about students' experiences on the schedule than were teachers on traditional contracts. Teachers assigned to specialty subjects also expressed greater preference for Extended-Day, saw more benefit to students, and felt more professional than Core subject teachers.

One-third of Extended-Day teachers experienced a large amount or extreme stress in discipline, paperwork, written reports to parents, parent conferences, teaching salary and number of students taught in a day. Forty-nine percent of Extended-Day teachers expressed a preference for teaching on the Extended-Day schedule. Fifty-nine percent of teachers with extended contracts expressed a preference for Extended-Day, while only 28% of teachers on traditional contracts preferred Extended-Day.

SCHOOL OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

Extended-Day schools are generally busy places with students moving between classes and activities conducted in the specialty classes. The majority of specialty classes we visited were interesting. In a few of the larger, upper grade specialty classes students toward the back of the class were not on task, however, in only three classes across the state did we see actual disruptive behavior in the specialty classes.

Generally, office and custodial staffs have had to make the most change in their procedures. Custodians worked longer days and in several schools the head custodian split his hours, coming earlier in the morning and going home until it was time to set up tables for lunch. Office staffs had to design a tracking system so that they could find students as they moved from class to class.

ACHIEVEMENT DATA

Here again, all school districts do not give the same achievement tests and some districts have changed tests, norms, or timing of tests in the period of interest. Because of this, each Extended-Day school was considered as a case study and evaluators compared performance before the implementation of Extended-Day schedule with performance after. Although more Extended-Day schools showed improvement in test scores than showed a decrease, the overall pattern was not significant. Although Extended-Day schools did not show significant gains on test scores, the program was also not found to be harmful to student achievement.

COST ANALYSIS

Again, cost analysis of the Extended-Day program was complicated by several factors. As stated before, design capacity for a given school is a nebulous figure, which varies depending on its source. In addition to this problem, Extended-Day schools frequently changed design capacity or altered facilities to accommodate the program. Second, enrollments in many of the Extended-Day schools were actually lower after the implementation of the schedule.

Generally, we found that educational costs were higher on the Extended-Day schedule than in the same school prior to the implementation of the schedule. Per student utility costs remain roughly the same, as does cost per student for teachers. The cost per student for other personnel was significantly higher after the implementation than before. These additional costs are about the same size as the costs per student seat of new construction to accomodate increases in students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At this point we find it important to stress that this is an evaluation of the Extended-Day and Year-Round programs as alternatives to building new facilities to accommodate growth in student enrollment. Data from the evaluation may be useful for those looking at the programs for other purposes, however, these recommendations focus on the usefulness of Extended-Day and Year-Round programs as what we refer to as alternative housing programs.

1. Assess long and short term projections for growth before moving to any alternative housing program. Before going to an alternative housing program, a district should assess where their enrollments stand on the growth curve. If a district is in a sustained growth period, alternative housing programs simply postpone the inevitable building. This postponement only makes building more costly. However, if projections show that the growth curve will begin to drop off, alternative housing programs can provide relatively short term methods for dealing with growth and alleviating the costs and political fallout of over-building.

2. Do not adopt an alternative housing program until the need arises. Having made this strong statement, we must temper it with a definition of "need." Generally, alternative housing programs implemented before a school's student population is and will continue to be well above design capacity creates greater per pupil expenditures. Our recommendation is to not go to a Year-Round or Extended-Day program until the enrollment need is clearly present. However, there will be exceptions to this. Sometimes it is politically expedient to move a number of schools to an alternative program at the same time. Sometimes patron support for the program is as pressing as an overcrowded school. In one instance, a new school was opened under capacity as a Year-Round school because the future need was obvious and the students were being transferred from an existing Year-Round facility. In other areas, placing one school on an alternative housing program while neighboring schools remain on a traditional calendar has created contention in both

patron and teacher groups.

The recommendation is to look carefully at need before adopting an alternative housing program. If the need is not immediate overcrowding, a district must recognize that the per pupil costs in the building will probably rise. Special provisions may be necessary to handle growth in districts with relatively few schools located in communities distant from one another in which growth is occuring. It is simply not easy to accomodate growth by bussing or other means of either loading one school or distributing the load across several schools.

3. Choose the alternative program carefully. Our evaluation indicates that implementation of a Year-Round program tends to house more students in a more cost effective manner. This does not mean that this program is the ultimate answer to every district's problems. Careful examination of the strengths and weaknesses of each program in light of the district's needs and constraints is vital. For example, while an air conditioned building is an imperative for Year-Round Education in this climate, it is not the only building consideration. A four-track Year-Round calendar usually requires at least eighteen classrooms. Patrons in rural areas may not be able or willing to forgo the help which their children provide in agriculture. Teachers may have similar problems.

Extended-Day programs have constraints. Again, the facility must have adequate space to handle the larger specialty classes and be designed to allow room to room transitions to be handled efficiently. Central facilities, such as bathrooms, lunchroom and media centers, need to be able to adequately serve students. If student population is projected to reach fifteen to twenty percent over capacity, Extended-Day will not provide enough expansion. Finally, teacher talents and willingness to specialize make a significant difference in the quality of the program offered.

4. Carefully examine the role of the principals and give them some assistance. In both Extended-Day and Year-Round programs the

principal's work load increases tremendously. Especially on the Year-Round program, teachers tend to experience less stress, while the principal experiences more stress. These Year-Round principals need good coverage while they take their vacations and assistance in some of the day-to-day work in order for them to be involved in the instructional aspects of their school. They now face what many other professionals have always faced: the work does not stopped while they are on vacation and it is waiting for them when they come back. They may need training to help them use their assistants and develop different planning strategies than traditional program principals.

Individual districts should examine the compensation for principals to assure that these principals are being adequately compensated for the extra workload the programs create.

Finally, on both the Extended-Day and Year-Round programs, the principal is a key individual in the success of the program. In successful programs, the principals tend to welcome challenges, provide leadership and encourage innovation in their staffs. When implementing a program in a new school or transferring principals into existing programs, great care must be taken to provide the kind of individual who can make the program successful.

5. Establish a problem-solving relationships between the district and the schools. Schools on either of these programs have different needs and constraints than traditional schools. District offices have made progress in understanding these needs. However there is room for improvement. Where appropriate, a liaison between district offices and alternative program schools may smooth problems. Hold meetings with program principals where they can share their concerns and meet with appropriate district personnel. Be sure that every district office that has a traditional school calendar also has a Year-Round calendar and consults both calendars before making decisions or sending out schedules. The same is true of the Extended-Day schedule, especially when setting up after school meetings.

6. Never implement a program without intensive inservice with the teaching staff. We saw a marked difference in teachers who had been involved in planning the implementation of their program, who had visited other facilities and who had talked to teachers experienced in their program compared with teachers who had not. Teachers who had this opportunity were generally more positive and took a more problem solving approach to implementation. We recommend that this inservice involve several schools which have successfully implemented the program, rather than just those who are leaders in the implementing the program, so that teachers get a feel for the variations possible.

7. Work with non-certified staff in the school before and after implementation to encourage a problem-solving attitude. In one school we visited, the custodian literally hated the Year-Round program and was very verbal about his feelings. He had the potential to do more damage to the program than any single irate patron because he associated with so many people on a daily basis. We actually observed his influence on other non-classified staff members. We recommend that prior to and after implementation of a program, the non-certified staff, as well as the teaching staff, be offered the opportunity to transfer. Frequently we heard staff complaining about problems that had been solved in other schools. We recommend that these people have opportunities to talk to their counterparts in schools where the program has been implemented.

8. Allow the school the autonomy to make changes. In many of the schools we visited, the principals and teachers were obviously making the adaptations needed to make their program succeed under their particular circumstances. However, we saw programs handicapped by district policies which did not suit the alternative program situation. Sometimes resource or special services coordinators planned programs which did not suit the needs of a program. Other times districts mandated (or were perceived to mandate) procedures which seemed to make sense, but when put into practice created problems in some schools. For example, a mandate

for balanced track size in Year-Round schools caused some schools to re-register students after only one year of operation. The re-registration process opened old wounds with some patrons and created tensions between the school and some patrons.

The same is true in the relationship between principal and staff. In some schools, teachers were directed and monitored; in many others, teachers and administrators worked together to develop strong programs.

Autonomy does not imply lack of supervision, but that supervision include a recognition of constraining factors and a professional educator's abilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMS

1. Make use of extended contracts where possible. Extended contracts offer benefits for both teachers and principals. Using these contracts creates more flexibility in staffing. Extended contracts offer financial relief for teachers who are no longer able to participate in their traditional summer employment. In this way, these contracts are vital. Not every teacher wants an extended contract, nor is every teacher capable of handling an extended contract. We have observed that extended contract teachers need to be very organized and structured in their record keeping and planning, and able to deal with a number of students and the frequent on and off pattern of the track system. They all experience more overall stress on the Year-Round program. Not all situations warrant extended contracts, i.e. student load must be at a certain level and, usually, several teachers on the same grade level need to be placed on these contracts. Even given all these caveats, we recommend that extended contracts be used where possible because of the benefit to the teacher. Some teacher stress is generated because of the loss of summer employment. Other teachers feel the benefit from being involved in their profession all year.

2. Offer flexibility in the extended contract. Given our

recommendation in number one, we must make an additional recommendation concerning extended contracts. Extended contract teachers report more stress than traditional contract teachers and express a preference for the Year-Round calendar slightly less than traditional contract teachers. This is surprising and concerning, especially when an Extended-Day teacher on an additional contract is exactly the opposite.

We observed that in some districts, the extended contract was almost ridiculously flexible--teachers could contract for any number of days above the traditional contract. In other districts, extended contracts were offered for the number of days the school was in session with no additional sick leave or personal leave time. We recommend a more moderate policy, wherein extended contracts are offered for a specific number of days and allow for a vacation some time during the year in addition to the two week break in July. Consideration should also be given to proportionately increasing sick leave and/or personal leave days where available.

3. Avoid re-registering tracks frequently. We know that several Year-Round schools have made it a policy to re-register tracks each year and have not found this re-registration to be a problem. However, we feel that for most schools this process is less than helpful. We found that schools which had re-registered tracks this year had a more negative patron rating than schools that did not. While the difference in ratings was only around ten percent, in actual practice ten percent of patrons less pleased about a program is not easily dealt with, especially if they are vocal. Although certain tracks are definitely more attractive to patrons, we have also found that the majority of families tend to adapt to the schedule after the first year. If families change schedules each year, which is possible for those who do not get their first track choice, they never get a chance to adapt. Additionally, many vacations in businesses are scheduled as early as January and February, yet track change notifications are rarely made until

April. Therefore the family may have planned to vacation on one schedule and be placed on another.

Except in highly transient areas, we recommend that track changes be made upon patrons request and based on availability. Schools also may find it necessary to ask some patrons to change tracks (and will undoubtedly find varying success with their request). We recommend that total re-registration be conducted on an infrequent basis.

4. Room rotation. Recognizing that we have previously made a recommendation for autonomy in the schools, we now recommend considering a policy that reduces autonomy. Room rotation is a major irritation to Year-Round teachers. In some schools teachers have taken extreme steps to avoid changing rooms, including squeezing four classrooms into three open class spaces or continuing to tie up Kivas and other special function space as regular classrooms. We recommend that the school make rotating rooms as simple as possible, including providing rolling filing cabinets, extra teacher desks, custodial help for teachers, and secure storage areas. Then, because the purpose of adopting a Year-Round calendar is to avoid putting students into every nook and cranny of the school, assign teachers to room spaces which fulfill both fire codes and the intent of the original building design.

5. Families of teachers. Another problem teachers identified was having their own children on a traditional calendar while they worked on a Year-Round calendar. Although there is still little that can be done about secondary students on a traditional calendar, teachers need to be permitted to transfer their own elementary students to their own or another Year-Round school, if they so desire. And when Year-Round secondary schools are created, Year Round teachers will need to have the same opportunity to transfer their secondary students to a Year-Round secondary school, if they desire. Although this may be a policy in some districts, we came upon instances when principals or other teachers

discouraged teachers from doing so and created a hardship for teachers who are also parents.

EXTENDED DAY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assure that specialty classes are actually providing curriculum beyond that which a traditional classroom teacher would provide. In our observations, specialty classes had the greatest variance of any part of the Extended-Day program. Some classes were so well done that our observers did not want to leave when their observations were complete. Other classes might be rated as average, and a few were less than desireable. If the Extended-Day program is going to provide something extra, principals need to monitor their specialty classes closely to determine if, a) the teacher is capable of handling the subject and the class size, and b) the teacher is actually providing depth in his/her subject.

2. Be aware of stress felt by core teachers and traditional contract teachers. Our evaluation indicates that specialty teachers and teachers on extended contracts are more positive about the Extended-Day program than core teachers. Teachers on traditional contracts see less benefit in the program, experience more stress and tend to prefer a traditional schedule. We have no answers as to why the core teachers are less positive than specialty teachers, but feel that it is important that administrators track the feelings and stress of these teachers in order to avoid possible problems in the future.

3. Avoid remodeling which is specifically designed to enhance the Extended-Day program, unless you plan to stay on the program even if enrollment drops. One of our assessments of why Extended-Day does not appear to be as cost effective as originally planned is that several schools went on the program, then found it necessary to change existing facilities to meet those needs. The expansion of building space may have occurred without the program, but were frequently made into special use spaces. In addition, a number of the schools actually showed a reduction in enrollment rather than

an increase. The combination of the two reduced the cost effectiveness of the program.

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